

BAD LANDS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA - 9,426 acres

The Bad Lands WSA (NV-010-184), located approximately 65 miles northeast of Elko, Nevada and 25 miles southwest of Jackpot, Nevada, includes rough volcanic ridges and cliffs and eight miles of Salmon Falls Creek. A telephone line and bladed access road form the southern and most of the western boundaries. Private lands at Twin Meadows Ranch comprise the remainder of the western boundary. A rugged four-wheel drive road defines the eastern and northern boundary. The WSA's southeast corner adjoins private lands at Burnt Meadows. There are no split estate lands or private inholdings.

2. <u>RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE -</u>	8,415 acres recommended for wilderness
	1,011 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate 8,415 acres as wilderness because of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for both solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. The remaining 1,011 acres would be released for uses other than wilderness.

Salmon Falls Creek, as it meanders through the WSA, offers outstanding opportunities for floating, hiking, primitive camping, fishing, photography, and sightseeing. The rugged, volcanic cliffs and canyons are extremely scenic and provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. The sinuosity and the lush riparian vegetation of Salmon Falls Creek provide excellent screening.

Conflicts with other resources are nonexistent. There are no identified mineral resources and low potentials for undiscovered deposits of all metallic minerals and energy resources. As of October 1989, there were no mining claims in the WSA.

Seven small parcels along the WSA's periphery make up the 1,011 acres not recommended for wilderness. These parcels are not recommended for wilderness because man-caused intrusions significantly diminish wilderness values. These intrusions, which were missed during the intensive inventory, include a rangeland seeding, an earthen reservoir, a bladed fence line, and a pre-FLPMA telephone line and bladed access road.

3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

A. Naturalness: The 8,415 acres recommended for wilderness are predominately natural and free of man's imprints. The area is rugged with volcanic outcroppings and ridges. Elevations range from 5,700 feet to over 6,000 feet. Salmon Falls Creek, with its lush riparian vegetation, meanders below 250-foot canyon walls. Pinnacles and spires over 100 feet tall tower over the creek. Man's imprint consists of one earthen reservoir and three vehicle ways. The earthen reservoir is located along the north boundary road and is visible only in the immediate vicinity. The three vehicle ways along the eastern boundary do not detract from the area's naturalness because of the rugged terrain. The overall influence of man on the area's naturalness is negligible.

The 1,011 acres not recommended for wilderness contain imprints missed during the intensive inventory. A substantially noticeable 100-acre crested wheatgrass seeding significantly diminishes naturalness in the WSA's northwest corner. The bladed fence line just inside the eastern WSA boundary and the telephone line/bladed access road inside the southern boundary create long, narrow strips with the intrusions on one side and the boundary road on the other. This significantly diminishes naturalness.

B. Solitude: Within the area recommended for wilderness there are outstanding opportunities for solitude. Along Salmon Falls Creek, the sinuous canyon, towering walls, and rugged side canyons provide excellent opportunities for solitude. The riparian vegetation along Salmon Falls Creek and in the lower reaches of the side canyons enhance these opportunities. While the vegetative screening above the canyon is poor, the rough volcanic mesa and rugged rocky outcroppings provide good topographic screening.

Military aircraft sometimes disrupt the solitude. A Military Training Route, used for low-level, high-speed exercises, covers most of the WSA. Flight elevations vary, but aircraft fly as low as 100 feet above ground level. Disruption of the silence, which contributes to the feeling of solitude in the Bad Lands WSA, is still infrequent. At times, aircraft can be seen and/or heard all day. Other times, one can travel for days and not see or hear a military jet.

Within the area not recommended for wilderness, opportunities for solitude are nonexistent.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The area recommended for wilderness contains outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Most of the WSA allows for unconfined freedom of movement because of the many drainages, hills and ridges. While users would concentrate along Salmon Falls Creek, the riparian vegetation and canyon's sinuosity ensure that opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are available.

Fishing opportunities along Salmon Falls Creek are excellent. The creek offers a challenging adventure to kayakers and rafters during high water. The diversity of wildlife species, including river otter, raptors, chukar, cougar, and bobcat, provides outstanding opportunities for wildlife observation and photography. Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep were reintroduced into the area in 1989, adding another opportunity.

There are no opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation in the areas not recommended for wilderness.

D. Special Features: The WSA contains no special features.

4. MANAGEABILITY

The 8,415-acre area recommended for wilderness is manageable as wilderness due primarily to its extreme ruggedness and relative inaccessibility. There are no mining claims or oil and gas leases. The potential for undiscovered deposits of all metallic minerals or energy resources is low. There are no private inholdings, state lands or rights-of-way. The rugged, rocky terrain limits opportunities for ORV travel.

The 1,011 acres not recommended for wilderness are not manageable as wilderness. The seeding must be periodically maintained. The four small parcels along the east and south boundaries are not manageable as wilderness because of telephone line and fence line maintenance requirements.

5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES

According to a USGS report, the area has no identified mineral resources and low potential for undiscovered deposits of all metallic minerals and energy resources. As of October 1989, there were no mining claims in the area.

6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS

The BLM received 42 comments on the draft EIS. Four supported more wilderness than proposed, seven supported the proposed action, 25 supported less wilderness than proposed, and six had no position. Most comments specific to the Bad Lands WSA touched on high wilderness and scenic values and potential enhancement from bighorn sheep reintroduction. Comments opposing wilderness centered on the potential for increased visitor use to adversely affect the small area.

County agencies or officials submitted no comments. The Governor of Nevada's consistency review supported the BLM's original preferred alternative but suggested developing a more identifiable eastern boundary.

The EPA requested clarification in the final EIS on interim management, off-road vehicle use affecting potential wilderness status, access for mineral exploration or development, and the use of USGS/BOM surveys to modify wilderness recommendation. The U.S. Air Force supported alternatives that would not restrict military overflights.

The BLM received one comment on the final Wells Wilderness EIS; the EPA supported the proposed action.